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<b>B.C., Appellant</b>	)	
	)	
<b>and</b>	)	<b>Docket No. 21-0585</b>
	)	<b>Issued: March 11, 2022</b>
<b>U.S. POSTAL SERVICE, HARVEST POST</b>	)	
<b>OFFICE, Harvest, AL, Employer</b>	)	
	)	

*Case Submitted on the Record*

Before:  
ALEC J. KOROMILAS, Chief Judge  
PATRICIA H. FITZGERALD, Alternate Judge  
VALERIE D. EVANS-HARRELL, Alternate Judge

On May 7, 2018 appellant, then a 58-year-old rural carrier, filed a traumatic injury claim (Form CA-1) alleging that on May 4, 2018,<sup>1</sup> at approximately 8:30 a.m., he strained his back when picking up a delivery point sequence (DPS) tray while in the performance of duty. He stopped work on the alleged date of injury. OWCP assigned the claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx463.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The record reflects that appellant has a prior claim for a February 4, 2009 traumatic injury, that was accepted for lumbar sprain under OWCP File No. xxxxxx873. Appellant also has a prior claim for a June 7, 2011 traumatic injury accepted for shoulder and upper arm sprains; abrasions/friction burn; contusion; face, neck, and scalp abrasions/friction; neck sprain; lumbar sprain; and concussion under OWCP File No. xxxxxx378. Additionally, he filed a Form CA-1 on September 29, 2017 alleging that he sustained a work-related back and neck injury on that date under OWCP File No. xxxxxx574. Appellant subsequently filed another Form CA-1 alleging that on November 16, 2017 he strained his mid-back under OWCP File No. xxxxxx665.

By decision dated January 14, 2019, OWCP accepted that the May 4, 2018 incident occurred as alleged, but denied appellant's claim as the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish causal relationship between a diagnosed medical condition and the accepted employment incident.

OWCP received additional medical evidence.

On September 21, 2019 appellant requested reconsideration.

By decision dated November 8, 2019, OWCP modified the January 14, 2019 decision to find that appellant had not established the factual component of his claim.

On February 4, 2020 appellant requested reconsideration and submitted additional medical evidence.

By decision dated March 23, 2020, OWCP denied modification.

On June 19, 2020 appellant requested reconsideration. By decision dated September 11, 2020, OWCP denied modification of the March 23, 2020 decision.

On October 1, 2020 appellant requested reconsideration and submitted additional evidence.

By decision dated November 13, 2020, OWCP denied modification.

The Board has duly considered the matter and concludes that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files.<sup>3</sup> For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition or the same part of the body, doubling is required.<sup>4</sup> In the present claim, appellant alleged injuries to his back, shoulders, and neck. He has prior claims before OWCP alleging neck, shoulder, and back injuries, including previously accepted claims under OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx873 and xxxxxx378. However, OWCP has not administratively combined appellant's claims.

For a full and fair adjudication of appellant's current claim, the case must be remanded to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record with OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx873, xxxxxx378, xxxxxx574, and xxxxxx665.<sup>5</sup> Following this and other such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision.

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<sup>3</sup> Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the November 13, 2020 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and this case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: March 11, 2022  
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Valerie D. Evans-Harrell, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board